

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

DEPARTURES

**A Fresh
Perspective**

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Back From the Edge

Magnificent new vessels, bucket-list destinations and a greener approach: here's everything you need to know about cruising in 2022. *by Gary Buchanan*

The new *Minerva* off the coast of Antarctica

THE CRUISE INDUSTRY has weathered many storms, but the pandemic plunged it into uncharted waters. Around the world, sailings halted and more than 330 ships were docked in the doldrums. This seascape of despondency has now been replaced by one of burgeoning recovery, with no fewer than 242 leviathans stirring from their stasis.

Pent-up demand to sail the seven seas is off the charts as travellers strive to check off frontrunners on post-lockdown bucket lists.

Underpinning this rebound, cruise companies are upping the ante, new brands are emerging and a coterie of expedition vessels is offering itineraries little short of heroic. Especially bullish are companies operating in the luxury sector where spaciousness has become a defining quality. Smaller ships with superior ratios affording more space per guest are undoubtedly the hot ticket. Quality rather than quantity is the new maxim in cruise circles. Here, we reveal the trendsetters.



The *Silver Origin* approaches the rock island of León Dormido in the Galápagos

Terra Incognita

It's no understatement that cruising the remote corners of the globe unveils a cavalcade of ineffable seascapes, but when it comes to luxe credentials aboard the flotilla of new expedition ships, hyperbole is futile.

Seabourn Venture (seabourn.com), the first of the line's two purpose-built, ultra-luxury expedition vessels, launches in July. The signature decor of Adam D Tihany prevails aboard this much-anticipated ship, which boasts oceanfront veranda suites and notable cuisine, including menus created by Michelin-starred chef Thomas Keller. The 264 guests can revel in explorations aboard 24 zodiacs, kayaks and two six-passenger submarines. Sister ship *Seabourn Pursuit*, which is slated to enter service next March, will chart an epic track of the Northwest Passage in August 2023.

Not to be outdone, the vessels of French cruise line Ponant offer intrepid global expedition cruising par excellence. *Le Commandant Charcot* (ponant.com), the first hybrid-electric Polar exploration ship powered by liquefied natural gas, accommodates 245 guests. With their understated design influenced by a subtle palette of cool neutrals, the suites and staterooms plus private balcony range in size from 20 to 115 square metres. For serious aesthetes, there are four stunning 94sq m split-level suites equipped with private terraces and jacuzzis. When not dining on gastronomy created by Alain Ducasse, passengers channel their

inner explorer as they set a course for the geographic North Pole, Northeast Greenland National Park, the Larsen Ice Shelf, or a circumnavigation of the Svalbard archipelago.

Viking is also enlisting for the expedition cruising trend by launching a pair of identical 378-passenger Polar vessels this year. After being christened in April, *Viking Octantis* (viking.com) will set a course for the

Great Lakes for the summer season before returning to the southernmost continent. *Viking Polaris*, which graces the oceans for the first time next summer, will spend her maiden season in Norway and the Far Arctic before the compass is set towards Antarctica. A first for Polar expedition vessels, all staterooms will feature a Nordic Balcony – a sunroom that converts into an alfresco viewing platform. Both vessels will also have a Finse Terrace – an outdoor lounge area just above sea level with recessed couches, warming lava-rock “firepits”, not to mention stunning panoramic views.

Similar close encounters with nature can be witnessed from the Water's Edge lookout at the bow of the 196-passenger *World Navigator* (atlasoceanvoyages.com). This unique platform, just nine metres above the



Le Commandant passengers kayaking in the Antarctic

water, is a superb vantage point for a rendezvous with wildlife. If it proves too chilly, then the Dome Observation Lounge with its warm, informal vibe is ideal; so too is the SeaSpa by L'Occitane. In addition to the Polar regions, *World Adventurer* and *World Seeker*, both of which are launching this year, will offer a roster of voyages to Iceland and Greenland as well as Central and South America.

Another sassy new ship with an impeccable pedigree is Swan Hellenic's 152-guest *Minerva* (swanbellenic.com), the first of three next-generation luxury expedition ships that has undertaken a successful maiden season in the Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetland Islands. Also set to navigate paths less travelled, its second ship, *Vega*, will be christened at London's Tower Bridge in April. All of the ships in the fleet will feature the Swan Restaurant, Club Lounge as well as the Pool Bar & Grill.

Discovery is inherent in the DNA of Lindblad Expeditions. This specialist operator with more than 50 years of experience has just taken delivery of the 126-passenger *National Geographic Resolution* (world.expeditions.com), sister ship to the acclaimed *National Geographic Endurance*. These fully stabilised vessels of the highest ice class (PC5 Category A) enable adventurous guests seeking unscripted exploration to go where few have gone before. Following her maiden season in Antarctica, this groundbreaking vessel will make her debut in Europe for a series of sensational cruises including an 11-day in-depth exploration of the viscerally wild Svalbard archipelago – the best place on the planet to see polar bears, wild and majestic in their native habitat. At the conclusion of this season of Arctic cruises, *National Geographic Resolution* will return to Antarctica via Japan, the East China Sea, and remote Pacific Islands.

The most novel route to Antarctica has been pioneered by Silversea (silversea.com) solely for the 144

guests heading to the winsome *Silver Explorer*. Taking just two hours, the Antarctic Bridge business-class flights from Punta Arenas in southern Chile make landfall at King George Island in the South Shetlands, thus avoiding a two-day crossing of Drake Passage. Silversea has also fired the latest salvo for kudos in the Galápagos. Launched in February, *Silver Origin* has luxury dialled all the way up, yet calibrated as an homage to the destination.

The 100 guests can bear witness to the kaleidoscope of evolution in this unique natural sanctuary of biodiversity.

Titans of the Tides

When it comes to superyachts, the prefix isn't a measure of magnitude so much as opulence – and now the must-haves in cruising are the few available for these opulent, almost personal vessels. With a svelte



Sylvia Earle under the northern lights of Lofoten, Norway

In the Green

The ultimate goal of the cruise industry is carbon neutrality, and the International Maritime Organization has set a target of a 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The quest for sustainable fuels and alternative propulsion systems is at the forefront of marine innovation.

Blazing a trail towards a decarbonised future, **SILVERSEA CRUISES'** Nova Class vessels will incorporate a triple hybrid fuel system. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be their main propellant, but this will be augmented by a bank of batteries, plus a hydrogen-based fuel cell system. Such a radical combination will achieve a 40 per cent reduction in emissions. silversea.com

Claimed to be the world's most environmentally friendly coastal ship, *Havila Capella* is the first of four vessels from start-up company **HAVILA VOYAGES**.

The new ships come complete with the world's largest battery pack which weighs in at 86 tons. This allows four hours of sailing without noise or emissions which will protect the fragile ecosystem of the Norwegian fjords. havilavoyages.com

AURORA EXPEDITIONS' groundbreaking 126-passenger *Sylvia Earle* is the second ship in their fleet to incorporate the X-BOW design. With its tapered shape, this game-changing bow results in fewer emissions and lower fuel consumption. auroraexpeditions.com

Regent's
Seven Seas
Explorer



Taking the Scenic Route

A cruise spanning several weeks weaves together sublime ports and astounding experiences into an unforgettable tapestry.

REGENT has unveiled four Grand Voyages in 2023/24, including a 78-night "Grand Arctic Adventure" from New York to Barcelona; a 62-night "Grand European Sojourn" from Stockholm to Athens; a 67-night "Circle South America" round trip from Miami; and a 59-night "Grand Asia-Pacific Journey" from Sydney to Tokyo. rssc.com

VIKING has announced parallel world cruises which will span 138 days, 28 countries and 57 ports. *Viking Sky* will depart from Fort Lauderdale on 20 December 2023; while *Viking Neptune* will depart three days later from the same port; both ships will sail the identical itinerary which concludes in Greenwich. viking.com

WINDSTAR CRUISES has announced a 79-day "Grand European Bucket List Adventure" – the longest itinerary ever offered by the award-winning small-ship cruise line. Visiting 22 countries, the cruise departs Stockholm on 25 July 2023 and sails the Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas. windstarcruises.com

Between March 2023 and May 2024, **SILVERSEA's** new voyage collection will have over 60 maiden calls and 197 overnight stays in port; there's also two grand voyages to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula as well as the Mediterranean. silversea.com

Seabourn Venture's 264 guests can revel in explorations aboard 24 zodiacs, kayaks and two sixpassenger submarines

exterior styled by Studio Scanu of Italy and incorporating interiors by renowned yacht designer François Zuretti, the 16-guest *Aqua Mare* (aqualexpeditions.com) reimagines the cruising dream. The first true superyacht in the Galápagos Islands pushes the envelope of chic. Unashamedly lavish, the 80sqm Owner's Suite is the largest in this enchanted archipelago, the other six suites are no less than 16 square metres. The serene lifestyle aboard this island-hopping nonesuch is augmented by twice-daily encounters with the unique inhabitants of this sanctuary of biodiversity.

With comparable high-style quotient and aesthetically pleasing interiors, the 100-guest *Emerald Azzurra* (emeraldcruiises.com) offers more than a soupçon of glamour. In addition to three artsy bars and restaurants, the Sky Deck with Spa Pool, there's a marina platform designed for swimming, snorkelling and paddleboarding. Small enough to venture into esoteric ports and secluded harbours, this 110m yacht will allow travellers aboard to relish stolen moments in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Aegean and Red Sea. Sister ship *Emerald Sakara* debuts in 2023, offering 10-night cruises around the

ravishing pattern of islands that is the Seychelles.

Looking to the future, Aman (aman.com), synonymous with soigné hospitality at intimate retreats, will launch a 183m motor yacht in 2025. Aboard this reimagined paradigm of privacy and grace, guests will be cosseted in 50 spacious luxury suites. Designed in partnership with Sinot Yacht Architecture & Design, which is renowned for its meticulously crafted and superbly detailed styling, the vessel will showcase Aman's alchemy of Eastern heritage and stellar service. There will be an Aman spa complete with a Japanese garden, two helipads, plus an exclusive beach club with direct access to the aquamarine waters lapping this style-drenched yacht.

Not all luxury hotel brands have had an uneventful arrival into the world of cruising. Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection (ritzcarltonyachtcollection.com) has delayed the introduction of its first ship – *Evrima* – on several occasions, but now it's poised to debut in August. The whip-smart 298-guest yacht will have five restaurants, plus Ritz-Carlton's personalised service. No doubt *Evrima* will become shorthand for stealth wealth.



The *Aqua Mare's*
commodious
Owner's Suite